

## Peter Kynaston Thomas

Expert in peripheral neuropathy

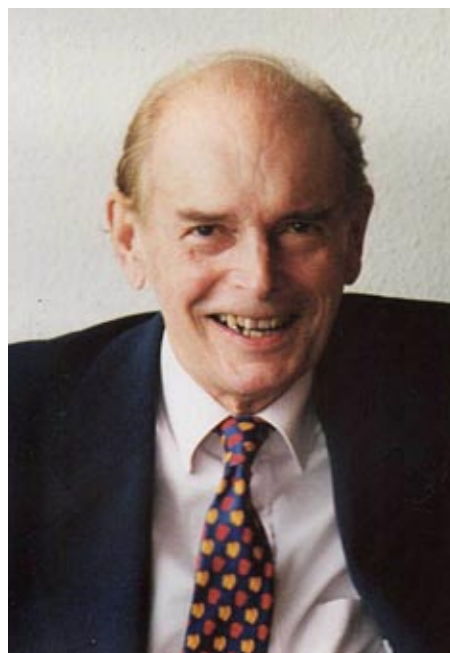
Always known by his initials, PK, Peter Kynaston Thomas was a prolific expert in peripheral neuropathy. He was a gifted researcher and writer, his research covering peripheral neuropathy and myopathy, both clinical and laboratory. He had wit, charm, and a gleam in his eye that readily mutated into a twinkle. He had exceptional energy and managed on five hours sleep a night. He hunted boars in Poland on his holidays.

The son of a timber importer, PK was educated at a bible school in Swansea, where he had an inspiring teacher. The school offered him a university scholarship but required him to work as a missionary afterwards, so he refused it. He entered University College London on an open scholarship in 1944 and got a first in anatomy three years later. By the time he qualified, three years later, he had worked as anatomy demonstrator and had published his first research paper. It was on the segmental growth of the lateral line nerve in fishes, cowritten with the anatomist J Z Young. The research material (trout) was an excellent source of dinner during food rationing.

After a year of house jobs at UCH, PK did his national service as a physiology specialist as secretary to a military research committee. Returning to civilian life, he spent a year each at the North Middlesex Hospital, the West End Hospital for Neurology and Neurosurgery, and the Middlesex Hospital. In 1957 he got his MD for a thesis on constitutional hirsutism in women.

During four years as senior registrar at the National Hospital for Nervous Diseases he started on the laboratory and clinical research he was to continue for a further 45 years, assembling his own recording equipment in the days before it became commercially available. He spent 1961-2 at McGill University, Montreal, as associate professor of neurology, doubling as consultant neurologist at the Montreal Neurological Institute and running the electromyography department.

He returned to the United Kingdom



as consultant neurologist at the Royal Free Hospital and Queen Square, by then renamed the National Hospital for Neurology and Neurosurgery. He was made senior lecturer and, from 1974, professor of neurology. From 1991, when he was 65, he was emeritus professor.

He remained at the Royal Free, researching, writing, and editing, until in 1999—two years after he received a CBE and the Association of British Neurologists' medal—it was decided that he could no longer have a room, whereupon he moved to Queen Square, which welcomed him.

PK was a fellow of two royal colleges, the physicians and the pathologists, a past president of the Association of British Neurologists, editor of the *Journal of Anatomy* and the *Journal of Neurology and Brain*, and served on several other editorial boards.

He published 314 original research papers, 74 articles and review papers, and 46 chapters in multiauthor books. His own books include *Peripheral Neuropathy* (1975 and 1984, with P J Dyck, E H Lambert, and R Bunge), *Disorders of Peripheral Nerves* (1983 and 1992, with four coauthors), *Aids to the Examination of the Peripheral Nervous System* (1986, with six coauthors), *Diabetic Peripheral Neuropathy* (four editions, with four co-authors), and *Peripheral Nerve Disorders* (1995, with A K Asbury).

He was immensely hardworking. While waiting at airports he would work on manuscripts. He was, said Dr Ros King, his colleague for 43 years, great fun to his colleagues and students. He would stay up till the early hours at conferences and still be down to breakfast. He was very active—skiing, gardening, walking, and playing squash.

Professor Alastair Compston of Cambridge University said he was “An extraordinarily versatile and intuitive clinician. He drew effortlessly on a vast font of knowledge and experience in shaping his clinical opinions and writings. As a talented scientist, PK was a key figure in the evolution of British neurology from its golden descriptive age into the modern discipline of clinical neuroscience.”

Professor Bill Pryse-Phillips of Newfoundland University, Canada, said: “He was my first neurology mentor in 1969. He was a man of great humanity and warmth. If you said something stupid, he took it seriously and gave a reasoned reply. He was free with good advice and a good listener. He would analyse what you said and come back to you. He was rational and non-judgmental. He was a fun-loving person and a passionate Welshman. He was a hesitant speaker but a superb writer.”

He married three times. His first wife, Mary Cox, died in 1977 after 25 years of marriage. He then married his former house officer Professor Anita Harding, who died of bowel cancer in 1995 (*BMJ* 1995;311:1085). In 1999 he married Sawanthana (Sam) Ponsford, an electrophysiologist. Two years later, in 2001, he had a major stroke while at a conference in the Netherlands. He struggled on, despite suffering from frequent aspiration pneumonia, and managed to review a PhD thesis (with Dr Ros King's help) and contributed to the editing of the fourth edition of *Peripheral Neuropathy*. He also helped to finish off some papers that were in the pipeline.

Details of his memorial service are available from the Association of British Neurologists or [graham.venables@sth.nhs.uk](mailto:graham.venables@sth.nhs.uk).

**Caroline Richmond**

Peter Kynaston Thomas, consultant neurologist, Royal Free Hospital, and professor of neurology at the Royal Free Hospital and Institute of Neurology (b 1926; q University College London 1950; CBE, MD, FRCP, FRCPATH), d 25 January 2008.

**OBITUARIES** continue on p 675

## James Alexander Culpin MacKeith



Forensic psychiatrist Bethlem and Maudsley Hospitals, London (b 1938; q Trinity College Dublin 1965; OBE, FRCPSych, ABPAS), died from cancer on 5 August 2007.

Over three decades James Alexander Culpin MacKeith ("Jim") showed how vulnerable individuals could under pressure in police interviews make false confessions. His work with the psychologist Professor Gisli Gudjonsson helped to secure the release of the Guildford Four in 1989, the Birmingham Six in 1991, and Judith Ward in 1992, leading to a full scale government review of the criminal trial process. From 1991 to 2006 he was expert adviser to the Council of Europe Committee for the Prevention of Torture. He was a founder member of, and the only doctor on, the Criminal Cases Review Commission. He leaves a wife, Keesje van Erkelens, and three children.

Sebastian Kraemer

## Ronald Henry Moray Mavor



Former chest physician and polymath (b 1925; q Glasgow 1948; CBE, FRCP), d 9 August 2007.

When Ronald Henry Moray Mavor ("Bingo") was born his father, Osborne, a physician, and the playwright James Bridie, exclaimed "Bingo!" and the nickname stuck. Bingo specialised

in chest diseases, but in 1957 left medicine to become drama critic of the *Scotsman*. He wrote eight acclaimed plays, including *A Private Matter*, directed by Ian McKellen and starring Alastair Sim, which featured full frontal male nudity, and *Dr Mavor and Mr Bridie*, a biography of his father. Director of the Scottish Arts Council, 1965-71, and deputy chairman of the Edinburgh Festival Committee, 1975-81, he became professor of drama in Saskatchewan. He retired in 1990 to Glasgow, then exhibiting his paintings. Predeceased by a daughter, he leaves two children and six grandchildren.

Mark Hughson

## Sheenah Jean McKinnon Russell



Former consultant paediatrician Dumfries and Galloway Royal Infirmary (b 1920; q Glasgow 1943; DCH, DPH, FRCP), d 27 November 2007.

Sheenah Jean McKinnon Russell encountered difficulties in pursuing her special interest of child health after the second world war. Eventually her appointment in 1954 as senior hospital medical officer with the specific designation of assistant paediatrician for Ayrshire and Dumfriesshire enabled her progression. In 1963 she became a consultant for Dumfries and Galloway. She helped plan the new infirmary, which enabled sleeping over by a parent, expansion of the role of ward schoolteachers, more emphasis on play, a relaxed atmosphere, and less restricted visiting. After her retirement in 1984 failing eyesight and eventual blindness did not diminish her altruism and interest in child health.

Morag Williams

## Thomas Semple



Former cardiologist Victoria Infirmary, Glasgow (b 1915; q Glasgow 1938; MD, FRCP), d 21 January 2008.

After junior posts, Thomas Semple ("Tommy") served as a medical specialist in the Royal Army Medical Corps and was demobilised with the rank of lieutenant colonel. He was appointed in 1947 to the Victoria Infirmary group of hospitals, and his early interest in respiratory medicine gave way to cardiology, in which he became a pioneer. With colleagues he presented and published the first UK results of successful cardiac resuscitation. He chaired the UK and International Society of Cardiology working parties on cardiac rehabilitation. Applying his expertise, he survived 40 years after his own heart attack. Tommy was active in all three UK Royal Colleges of Physicians, the university, and management. Predeceased by his wife, Betty, in 2005, he leaves four sons and nine grandchildren.

Peter Semple, Colin Semple

## Lionel Julian Stoll

Former general practitioner Camden, London (b 1907; q Guy's Hospital 1933; FRCP), died from pulmonary oedema and cardiac arrest on 21 November 2007.

Lionel Julian Stoll died a few weeks after celebrating his 100th birthday with a speech at a party at the Royal Society of Medicine. After qualifying, he established his practice in Primrose Hill, where, apart from wartime service as a Royal Air Force medical officer in Rhodesia, he worked until his retirement in 1987. His original practice became a large partnership and was among the first to promote women partners. Lionel was also a founder member of the Royal

College of General Practitioners, a BMA fellow, and chairman of the local family practitioners' committee and district management team. He had scarcely a week's illness in his entire adult life. He leaves a wife, Fiona; three children; and nine grandchildren.

Mike Pringle

## Heather Rosemary Winter



Senior lecturer Department of Public Health and Epidemiology, University of Birmingham (b 1959; q Queen's University Belfast 1982; MD, MRCOG, FFPHM), d 6 November 2007.

Heather Rosemary Winter initially intended pursuing a career in obstetrics, but, after a clinical research fellow post in Birmingham University, she re-trained in public health medicine, becoming a senior lecturer in 1996. She was a gifted academic. Her recent research focused on interventions to reduce maternal and perinatal mortality in the developing world, and is being continued through the team she worked with in Birmingham. She was committed to her work—working until a week before her death—her family, and her Christian faith, which underpinned everything she did. She leaves a husband, Eugene, and a son.

Catherine Finn, Christine MacArthur, Mary Trimble

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